

**ADVISORY EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR THE TEACHING OF ETHICS
DIVISION OF ETHICS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHS/EST)
UNESCO**

Meeting Minutes

Venue: UNESCO HQs, Bonvin Building
Room 2.08
1, rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France

Date: 4-5 June 2008

Participants:

Members of Advisory Expert Committee:

- Mr Ruben Apressyan, COMEST, Russian Federation
- Mr Amnon Carmi, UNESCO Chair, Israel
- Mr Leonardo de Castro, IBC, Philippines
- Mr Diego Gracia, COMEST, Spain
- Mrs Nouzha Guessous-Idrissi, IBC, Morocco
- Mr John Williams, WMA

Members of the Secretariat:

- Mr Henk ten Have, Director SHS/EST
- Mr Tee Wee Ang, SHS/EST

Apologies:

- Mr D. Balasubramaniam, TWAS
- Mr Donald Evans, IBC, New Zealand

Discussion:

Mr ten Have welcomed members of the Advisory Expert Committee for the Teaching of Ethics and emphasized that the purpose of this meeting was to finalize the Syllabus Section (Section 1) of the Bioethics Core Curriculum proposal as well as to discuss the next stages of work for this project.

Mr de Castro was then invited to brief the Committee about a workshop on the *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* that was organized in Manila, Philippines earlier this year. The workshop was structured according to the content of the pre-finalized Bioethics Core Curriculum proposal (principles of the Declaration) as a method of preliminary testing for the document. Participants of the workshop were mostly from the medical profession but also include members of ethics committees, teachers of medicine and natural sciences who are teaching bioethics and teachers of bioethics. They were asked to develop teaching modules using the proposed core curriculum and to

provide feedback on the content. A website based on an open source web-based software (“moodle”) was created as a repository for the modules developed as well as to share related resources. Since the website is not publicly accessible (username and password protected), sharing of copyrighted materials for strictly educational purposes is possible. Materials available on the website include the cases and suggested materials in the proposed core curriculum. During the workshop, participants also suggested case studies that they thought should be included and referred to their actual experiences. These suggested case studies are currently being collected, and there is an offer to help participants write up their actual experiences into case studies. The workshop was carried out in 40 hours over 5 days, and was a combination of lectures, discussions and small group discussions.

The overall appraisal of the workshop was very positive, with many participants demonstrating a strong eagerness to recommend the workshop to their colleagues. The participants were of the opinion that the Declaration is a good way of providing a common and authoritative framework that will unify the different aspects in bioethics. The proposed core curriculum is a significant step forward in the teaching of bioethics since it represents UNESCO’s authority, which has been approved by Member States, in the field of bioethics that can be invoked in their classes and examples. The next workshop is scheduled for October 2008.

It was pointed out and agreed that once the proposal has been finalized, the Committee needs to develop a comparable methodology to obtain scientifically sound evaluations of its implementation during the pilot testing phase.

Mr Apressyan highlighted that when the proposal was presented in Belarus and Russia, teachers expressed a strong interest in the core curriculum but were quite resistant to presenting bioethics through the principles of the Declaration. Teachers are already familiar with the former set of principles by Potter and felt uncomfortable about the new paradigm as a normative discipline.

Mr ten Have clarified that the primary goal of proposed core curriculum is to provide a starting point for new courses where none exist; the secondary goal is to add new perspectives to existing courses; it is not meant to change existing bioethics teaching. The basic assumption is that the core curriculum will be used by teachers who have never taught bioethics. It was suggested that perhaps the introduction section of the core curriculum should clarify further how the proposal could relate to traditional teaching.

The Committee then proceeded to discuss and make final changes to all parts of Section 1 of the core curriculum proposal. These changes are not reflected in this report but are captured in the finalized document. Members of the Committee were given until 20 June 2008 to submit specific text changes to the Secretariat for the units under their responsibility, if required.

Mr ten Have stated that Section 1 of the core curriculum will be finalized and translated into Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish between June and September 2008. Pilot sites

for testing the proposal will be identified from October 2008 until mid 2009. Testing at the identified pilot sites will commence in 2009 and conclude in May 2010, at which point testing data are to be collected and evaluated. Thus far, potential pilot sites have been identified in Argentina, the CIS countries, India, Israel, Kenya, Morocco and the Philippines. These potential pilot sites include schools in medicine, nursing, philosophy and law. The proposal is to be tested as a multi-purpose course in bioethics. Members of the IBC will also be approached about identifying potential pilot sites within their countries if bioethics teaching does not already exist. It was also suggested that an announcement about the proposal be made during the September meeting of the International Association for Bioethics (IAB). In countries where there are no teachers in bioethics, teacher training courses can be introduced under the Ethics Education Programme (EEP).

Members of the Committee were requested to develop ideas on how to evaluate the course during the pilot testing for the next meeting. Each member of the Committee should identify a list of items to be evaluated for their units which would then be compiled into a document. If it is feasible in terms of timeframe and cost, professional evaluators could be brought in to consult on the resulting document before it is finalized. These evaluation items should be ready prior to the start of the pilot testing phase. It was also suggested that the feasibility of establishing UNESCO certification for teaching programmes using the core curriculum proposal be explored.

With regards to the Study Materials Section (Section 2) of the proposed core curriculum, it was suggested that a part discussing how to construct role plays and the purpose of readings be included in the beginning of this document. It was also highlighted that a new Global Ethics Observatory (GEObs) Database on Resources in Ethics would be launched soon and which could help develop the materials for Section 2 by making them available online through the system.

Mr Carmi proposed working with some units to generate cases for Section 2. The Committee set up two working groups under the coordination of Mr Carmi to work on generating cases for Unit 3 and Unit 4 (working groups for other units will be established at a later date if deemed necessary).

Composition of the Working Group for Unit 3 is as follow:

Mr Apressyan
Mrs Guessous
Mr Carmi

Composition of the Working Group for Unit 4 is as follow:

Mr de Castro
Mr Gracia
Mr Carmi

Mr Evans would be consulted on which working group he would like to join. The working methods of the two groups would include email correspondence and face-to-face meetings.

Mr ten Have would also write to Mr Benyakar in Argentina to discuss the possibility of seeking extrabudgetary funding for the creation of video fragments for the core curriculum proposal, as well as to discuss the possibility of uploading existing video fragments from his center onto the new GEObs Database on Resources in Ethics. A plan on how to proceed will be discussed during the next meeting of the Committee. The Secretariat would also check with the relevant department(s) within UNESCO on the copyright issue of utilizing videos for the core curriculum.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place from 19 to 23 January 2009, with the following schedule breakdown:

- 19 to 20 January 2009: Working Group for Unit 4
- 20 to 21 January 2009: Meeting of the full Committee
- 22 to 23 January 2009: Working Group for Unit 3